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Rev. Herbert W. Lath.



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SOUVENIR PAMPHLET

BEING

SIX SERMONS

—BY—

REV. HERBERT W. LATHE

*Preached in the First Congregational Church, Pasadena,
California.*

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST

"THY WORD IS TRUTH."

LOS ANGELES, CAL. :
REALITY PUBLISHING COMPANY
120 NORTH SPRING STREET.

1902.

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The Gift

of

Rev. Herbert W. Lathe

(Manitou, Colorado.)



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THESE Sermons are selected and published by friends in the First Church, Pasadena, and I am asked to write a few words of introduction.

There is no gospel worth preaching but the Gospel of Divine Grace, "the grace of God that bringeth salvation." That Gospel is clearly, fully and lovingly revealed in the Bible — "God its Author; truth without mixture its matter; and salvation its end."

Of that Gospel the Christian preacher is the herald. He has simply to preach the preaching that God has bid; and God's bidding is so plain that he may run who reads.

I have always aimed to preach a pure, simple and full Gospel; and in this endeavor one of my sweetest memories is of the beloved church in Pasadena, with which I labored seven happy years.

As I look over these Sermons, I am back again in that pulpit which I left so reluctantly. I see again the many dear faces; I feel once more the quick and sympathetic response of hearts made new by the Spirit of God.

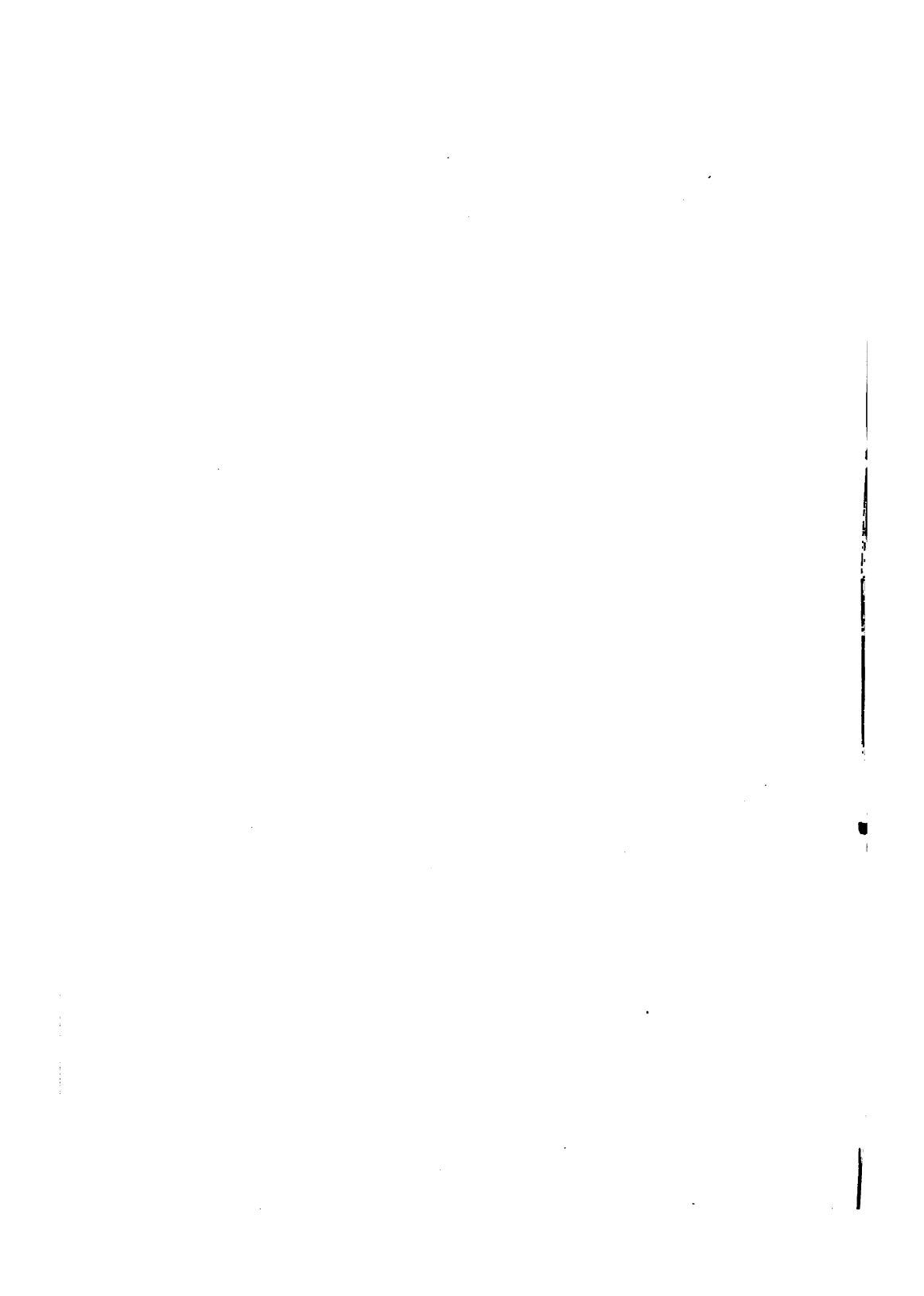
God bless you all! What we so feebly preach now, we will gloriously sing together hereafter.

HERBERT W. LATHE.

I.

A Thanksgiving Sermon.





A Thanksgiving Sermon.

Preached Sunday Morning, November 24th, 1901.

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord."—Ps. 116: 12, 13.

TRAVELERS in the East tell us, that when they make their way over the rough, rocky mountains, the guides sometimes stop and build little mounds of stone, and turn a moment to utter a word of praise for God's care thus far, and a prayer for their coming journey. Such a memory-spot as this is Thanksgiving Day. The springs of thanksgiving are deep down. True gratitude wells up from the depths of Christian faith and love. You say: "Anybody can give thanks; anybody can feel good because he has his way; anybody can praise the Lord when the Lord gives him what he wants." But genuine gratitude which takes the cup of salvation, with all that is in it, both sweet and bitter, and calls upon the name of the Lord in praise—that comes only from those who have accompanied with God and who have known the secret of His love.

Gratitude is an attitude, a condition of soul, not dependent at all upon what one receives from the Lord. One person has many things, and is dissatisfied and restless all his life; another has little, and

his life is full of praise and joy. It is what we are, not what we receive, which determines our gratitude. Is it claimed that a man may be grateful to God for material things, and not take account at all of spiritual things? That he can praise God for home, friends, business, health, and not praise Him for Jesus Christ, prayer and the church? He can use words; but direct, vital, glorifying thanksgiving comes only from one who has taken the cup of salvation.

"O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." It is the "redeemed of the Lord" who are able to say so. David was redeemed; and therefore he spoke these words out of a redeemed experience. What does he say, in the text? He asks a question and answers it.

FIRST.—*The question:* "What shall I render unto the Lord, for all His benefits toward me?"

There are two facts evident in this question: one is, that David had been reckoning up his mercies; and the other is, that he feels that in view of them there are certain obligations. He had been impressed evidently by the multitude of God's mercies to him, by the good things which God had given him; and he was also impressed with the fact that these mercies did indeed come from God. Thanksgiving, then, is more, and rather, the grateful recognition of God in His gifts, than the special recognition of the gifts themselves. It is a personal relationship established between the recipient and the Giver. We are invited at this Thanksgiving season to reflect on what God has done for us. On the crest of a great philanthropist were the words "Think and thank." When

one does think, he does thank. Those two words, differing simply in one letter, are the same in root in the old Anglo-Saxon. Thinkfulness was thankfulness.

When we count up our mercies, where shall we begin, and where shall we end? A little child told her father she would count the stars, and the father told her to go on. By and by, he heard the tired child: "Eighty-seven, eighty-eight, eighty-nine—Oh, dear! I had no idea there were so many of them." Where shall we begin and where shall we end if we name the gifts of God? What have we received that has not come from Him? Many of us, looking over the past year—I know from what you have told me, and I know it would be so with many who have not told me—looking over the past year, can recall special clearly marked benefits which they have received from God, for which to be thankful at this time. If we have indeed committed our way to God, that way has been kept by Him. As our minds dwell upon the way in which God has led us through the shadow and through the sunshine, our hearts glow with gratitude. Life loses its spring and its hope if there is no gladness in it. All joyousness adds to our efficiency. If the arm is to do with vigor and success, it must be impelled by a glad heart. For strength, there must be joy. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." The Christian should vindicate his religion by his joyousness. Not by hilarity nor superficial gaiety, but by the peace and joy intermingled, which may be quiet, but which testify to the love and the goodness of God. We honor God when we recognize Him as the Giver of gifts. A joyful, glad Christian allures the world.

"What shall *I* render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward *me*?" David is not afraid of that first personal pronoun. He sees the benefits of God, and says: "I am the man; I am at once the argument for and the illustration of the goodness of God. I have not concealed His lovingkindness and truth from the great congregation." If we had a little more personality in our testimonies, and in our prayer-meetings, telling a little more what God has done for us, and in our conversation with one another as we go through the world, there would be a power in it. If all the people could be gathered in a great church on Thanksgiving Day, and before the great congregation one after another could stand up and tell in simple language the benefits which he has specially received from God, and is specially grateful for on Thanksgiving Day, it would be the most eloquent Thanksgiving sermon that we ever heard. "All His benefits toward *ME*."

SECOND.—*The answer:* "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord?"

It is the natural desire of the human heart to recognize and to requite benefits. We are not satisfied to be simply recipients, even when God is the giver. There is a longing to express gratitude, and in some way to make a return. When we read the answer that David makes here to his own question we are surprised; because he says, the way in which to return the mercies of God is to take more! The way by which we may show our gratitude to God for all His goodness is to lay hold of that goodness in even larger measure!

There are several features of this. There is, for

instance, the acknowledgment of the goodness of God in words. We "take the cup of salvation" when we go into the house of God and praise and worship Him, in our anthems, our meditations on the truth; in the expression of faith and contrition and gratitude and adoration in our prayer. Do not make the mistake that the chief end of coming to church is to hear a sermon. It is not that. If God has been with us all through the week—if His loving-kindness has been over us—then we come into His house on the Sabbath day chiefly to worship Him, to praise Him; and for that reason we ought to be in the sanctuary on the Sabbath day.

In our private lives, family prayer, the expression of our thanksgiving and gratitude to God for all His goodness. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." Our recognition of God's gifts. How many people there are in the world—how many mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, workers here and there, who are longing for somebody to "say so"—to express commendation, the word of recognition, of encouragement! And God says: "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so."

What a remarkable expression that is of Christ's, "The Father seeketh such to worship Him." Think of God going out into this world—which is His and which He made—seeking true worshippers; those who shall worship Him in Spirit and in truth! We have Christ's own words for it, that the Father desires worship—the expression of gratitude to Him for the cup of salvation; and we take that cup as we worship.

Then, again, there is the cheerful acceptance of what God gives. "What shall I render unto the

Lord for all His benefits? I will take." Taking is gratitude. Submission to the will of God is thanksgiving. The willing acceptance of His providence is the evidence of and the expression of the grateful heart. The "cup" is of His filling. We requite Him when we accept it as His good will concerning us. What is there more wounding to the sensitive heart than to offer a gift and be turned away coldly and indifferently? We are made in the image of God, and He has the same feeling. How many cups there are that have come to us in life which have been bitter, which have been cups of salvation. Some of the most bitter have had the most salvation in them. We never knew what gratitude was until after we had drunk them. The cups of pleasure, to take them also as God's gifts to us; to take our prosperity, if God sends it — everything as God's gift; the acceptance of all that God gives. Here is the distinct promise of the Psalmist, that he will show his gratitude to God by accepting whatever God may have for him in the future, of weal or of woe, and call upon the name of the Lord in prayer and praise.

There is also in this answer the promise that he will take the spiritual gifts of God — "the cup of salvation." There is good reason for thinking that God thinks little, by comparison, of many things which we value very highly. While He does bestow the daily bread, and give the raiment that we wear, and take care of us in our temporal concerns, His heart is not chiefly in those things. We have good reason for thinking that God thinks most of spiritual things. How our Saviour pressed on earnestly in His discourses and in His work from the material and the temporal to the spiritual and the eternal;

from the loaves and the fishes to the words of eternal life!

“I will take salvation.” Do we take the material gifts of God, and are we really grateful for them, if we do not accept the spiritual gifts? Gratitude is not a mere matter of words. Do what little you can in return for God’s goodness to you, by taking the gift, the best gift, the gift of the Saviour. In Christ we have forgiveness, we have the grace of God, we have in Him all spiritual things; and how can we truly come to His house and praise him for the bread that perishes when we do not accept that which lasts to eternal life?

We measure our thanksgiving and our gratitude by how much salvation we take. It is possible to take a very little of God’s salvation, to drink a little of that cup. It is possible to take large draughts of it. One reason why we should not ask too many favors of a fellow-man is that we have already received so many from him we do not wish to impose upon him. A reason for asking more of God is that we have already taken much; and the more God gives, the stronger is the impulse within us to ask for yet more. It is a great and glorious thing to be saved; to be barely saved. It is beyond conception, the blessedness of entering the pearly gates and to be saved “so as by fire”; to have a little religion, to have a faint spark of the love of Jesus Christ. It is the most precious thing a man can have in this life. But why have so little when all the resources of God’s riches and grace are open to us; when we may have the Spirit and all the gifts of the Spirit? Why receive from the Lord the little things, and not take to its fulness the salvation which is the chief thing in the cup?

So gratitude is something which is developed through the spiritual life itself. The Christian graces are not separate things, like grains of sand. The Christian graces are like the fleece of wool. You take it up at any point and the rest comes with it. So love and joy and peace and gratitude and all the rest are interlaced. They are parts of one whole. As we develop faith, love, joy and peace, we feed and nourish the others. Therefore, the truest gratitude and the strongest thanksgiving must come from the heart which keeps very close to Christ in spiritual fellowship.

Here, also, is the test of every cup we take. "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." The old legend says: A king once took a cup of poison which had been offered by a young man and made over it the sign of the Cross, and the cup was shattered and its contents fell to the ground. Call the name of the Lord over the cup and test it, and see if there be the poison of the world in it. "I will take the cup of salvation" in every cup. I will not drink from earthly sources. I will not take draughts which have in them nothing of salvation. I will express my gratitude to God by living soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. When the cup of friendship is offered; when the cup of earthly companionship, worldly honor or worldly possession; whatever the cup is which is offered me, I will say: "Is this God's cup? Is there salvation in it?" If there is, I will accept it as His; but if not, I will refuse it.

Then also the truth that all God's cups are a part of salvation. That is to say, all His temporal work in our lives, and all the outbranching of His pur-

poses, and all the material things which He gives us, are a part of our salvation. That is, they are to work together for our good. Material gifts, the providences of God, His leading, all the things that concern our health and our welfare for time—all these things are a part of the great cup of salvation; because they are designed by Him to train us, to discipline us, to lead us nearer to Him, and thus to work out our salvation. I will take health or sickness, prosperity or adversity, sorrow or joy, all the providences of God, as a part of this cup of salvation, designed to have a place in my training and my discipline and my purifying. I will seek to see His salvation in every one of them. When I cannot see, I will believe; and I will call upon the name of the Lord in thanksgiving and praise.

We cannot think of a man of this spirit draining the cup of salvation, taking it all to himself. "I will take the cup of salvation" to the needy world. Another way in which we may express gratitude, by passing on this cup of salvation, comes within the cover of our text. Thanksgiving ought to prompt us to deeds of love and kindness in all directions. Thanksgiving ought to prompt us to consider what we are doing in our place for the salvation of the world. It is becoming the custom for various bodies to ask the preachers to set apart certain Sundays in the year for certain causes, and to preach on those causes on those Sundays. To-day we have received two requests, that it be a Temperance sermon, and that it be a Sunday School sermon. The two go together and overlap. One important part of the Sunday School teaching is to save the young from the temptation of strong drink. The leading aim of

Temperance work is to save the boys and girls from that curse. The wickedness of it is that the saloon must have the boy. Cursed business, that must live and thrive and exult in the ruin, body and soul, of our young men! How can any man or woman with a conscience and a heart be indifferent or lukewarm, or fail to take a stand in this question? Temperance work is salvation work. It is not chiefly the work of fighting somebody; but fighting in order to save the coming generations. Sunday School work is salvation work. Temperance is an ally of the Sunday School, and the Sunday School is the best effort of Temperance. Every Sunday we fortify our boys and girls against intemperance, whether we are teaching Temperance Lessons, or not. Do not think you are never teaching Temperance, when the word "temperance" is not in the Lesson. We protect our girls and boys when we save them. There is the Sunday School's chance—to bring them to Christ. Save the girls and the boys in the Sunday School, and you settle for them the Temperance question. We must work through the organizations, and give the Sunday School a chance with the boys and girls by keeping temptation out of their way.

The great word is SALVATION. We do not do much for people in this world if we do not save them; if we do not get the religion of Jesus Christ into them. The Temperance cause has shown not only its wisdom but has indicated its success, because it has been allied to religion. There is a great deal of good sense in some words of Rebecca Davis, written recently, in regard to this matter of surface-work of saving men: "There are books and music

and papers and games. The purpose of these is to lift men and women to a higher life. In the majority of instances, there is much danger that men and women will be scared away. We cannot fight lust in the soul by magic lanterns, etc. You do not uplift poor factory girls by amusing them, or teaching them literature and the habits of educated people; unless you get below the surface-work and put into their souls a great living purpose which will leaven their thoughts and hearts. The true method is the method of trying to convert the soul. This is the real need now, with the same men in the world, and the same God and the same devil. Men must still be brought to ask the question: "What must I do to be saved?" Without this, our charity which works through clubs, etc., is like Roland's horse—it is a perfect horse, but it has one fault, *it is dead.*"

Work on wherever God has put you—in the Sunday School, in the Temperance work, or where you may; but all our work is just this, to carry the cup of salvation to the thirsty world.

Thanksgiving and salvation! Gratitude and service! This Bible of ours is not a show-book; not a gallery of curiosities; not a museum of pretty sayings. It is a book that is full of blessings; but along with every blessing there stands an obligation. We who have received so much have great obligation. Its invitation is first "Come"; then, "Go." It says to every one of us "Receive"; but it does not stop there; it then says, "Give." "Come"; "Go." "Take"; "Freely ye have received, freely give." As we take the cup of salvation to our fellow-men and give to them of that which we have so freely received, though our joy and our gratitude for what

we had when we first took it ourselves was very deep and strong, we find that gratitude intensified and deepened and sanctified and blessed, when we take the salvation to this world which God sent His only Son to save.

O LORD! it is for Thee to save; it is for us to accept the salvation. Thou givest by grace; we receive by faith. Faith is the hand which we put out for Thy gifts. We have only to receive; and then, to pass it on. We pray that we may first of all be recipients. May no one turn away from the gift of God in Jesus Christ. Make us fruitful to do something for Him Who has done so much for us; to humbly accept it in His name and use it for His glory. Bless us to-day. We pray Thee that when the harvest comes, we may have the unspeakable joy of seeing some few sheaves brought in because of our sowing. To Thy name will we give all the praise. *Amen.*

II.

A Christmas Sermon.



A Christmas Sermon.

Preached December 22nd, 1901.

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last."—REVELATION 22: 13.

THERE are two ways of thinking of the birth of Christ: one way is to dwell on the incidents—the promise, the manger, the wise men, the shepherds, the songs, the external circumstances; the other way is the way of our text—to ponder upon the meaning of God in sending the Saviour into the world.

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last"—these are Christ's own words; and they mean that Christ is everything in Christianity. In learning the Greek alphabet, we begin with Alpha, the first letter; there is nothing before that. When we come to the last letter, Omega, we have finished; there is no alphabet afterward. Between these two, the Alpha and the Omega, there is the whole of literature—words, sentences, books, ideas, truths. So in Christ there is the whole revelation of God, the beginning and the end. "In the beginning was the Word," that is, the Alpha; and He is to be the end. After His name we put a period.

If now we interpret scripture by scripture, which is the best way, we find in this chapter from which our text is taken four prominent features or elements in which Christ is represented as the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

1. It is conspicuous at the start that there is an evident purpose in this chapter to guard revealed truth. The Revelator says that "these things are faithful and true." He says: "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book." "I am of thy fellow-servants and thy brethren who keep the sayings of the prophecy of this book." "Blessed is he that keepeth these things." Then at the end: "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life."

Christ is the beginning and the end of Christian truth. When Christ was born, the revelation of God was given to the world. To know the whole truth, we have only to know fully Christ. Whatever fundamental questions we ask are answered in Him. If we inquire concerning sin, its meaning, its destiny, its redemption; if our inquiries concern the sorrows of life, the meaning of affliction; or if we ask that question which men have been asking from the beginning: "If a man die, shall he live again?"—they are all answered in His teaching Who is the Alpha and the Omega.

What is the character of God? What character does He love in men? What will He do with sin? What is the way of salvation? Is there any meaning to trouble? Is there anything for a man beyond the grave? The great inquiries of the mind and the

heart of the race, find their answer in Jesus Christ. He was the beginning; and then, when He was done, they were all completely answered—He was the end. We do not need a new Saviour to reveal unto us truth. We do not need to go about to establish a new religion. There will be progress; but it will be progress toward Christ. There will be progress; but the path of advance does not lie in the direction of denying what Christ has taught, for the sake of something new. We shall revise our definitions; but we shall give no definition which will obscure the divine glory of Him Who was in the beginning with God, Who was God, and Who is God. We shall re-write our creeds; but we shall not blot out from our statement of truth the great central fact that the Lord hath laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all; that there is redemption through His blood, even the remission of sins, according to the riches of His grace. We shall reconstruct our theology; but we shall know no theory which will shut out the great truths that if a man will see the kingdom of God he must be born again; that repentance and faith are the way to pardon and peace; that the crowning life is Christ in the soul, ministered by the Holy Spirit. We are not bound to any hard and fast doctrine concerning the depravity of man; but any theory which denies what Christ said, that He came to seek and to save the lost; or any theory which denies, or obscures, or ignores the awful fact, the awful guilt of human sin, is blasphemy! Give us all that is new; but let it be true. Give us all that is new; but let it be no denial of what Christ has already given. There is really nothing new, except that which we find in Christ. Gain all that you will that is new; but find it in Him Who is Alpha and

Omega. He is the A and the Z—the alphabet is ended. Make all the literature of religion you will; but let it be within these limits.

Our faith stands on eternal foundations. There are some things that are established. You cannot add anything to the multiplication table. No man will ever improve on the statement that two times three are six. The relation of numbers is established. No astronomer will ever come forward to discover that the earth is greater than the sun, or that the moon is the centre of the solar system. No musician will ever add the ninth note to the scale. We have our Alpha and Omega there. Musicians will arise who will give us new harmonies, new melodies, possibly more divine than we have yet heard; but the octave will always remain a finality in musical notation.

No one will add to the truth as it is in Jesus. The way of salvation is fixed. Live two thousand years hence, if the world exists; there will be wonderful discoveries and inventions, which will perhaps change the whole face of civilization; there will be wonderful progress in scholarship, in human learning; but Christ will still be the scholar's hope, and Christ will be the scholar's light, and the Holy Spirit will be his Comforter and his Sanctifier. If an angel from heaven preach any other gospel, it is false. We have the Alpha and the Omega in Him. We cannot anticipate what the outward life of man will be in the year 2,500; but we know what his religious faith will be. Everything essential that he will know, we know. In the book of this prophecy it is written, that when we reach heaven, the song which we shall sing before the throne will be the very song

with which we are familiar now, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

2. All through this chapter runs the idea, also, of the fulfillment of a great divine purpose. Christ is the beginning and the end of the plan of God for mankind. The Scriptures are full of this truth, that Christ occupies a unique relation toward the human race. He was different from all men; and yet He was a man. His character was God's character; so that He could say: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." As a man, by the purity of His own character, He could invite the humblest: "Follow Me"; "Do like Me." Thus He was God and man; the one Being on earth Who was ever mediator between the two. There are many passages in the Scriptures which shade off into mystery, but which yet hint to us—and more than hint—that God is dealing with the human race through Christ. All things were made for Him—for Christ; by Him God created the world. Before He came to the earth, He was not ashamed to call us "brethren." He did not become our Brother when He came to earth; He was our Brother before. We are chosen in Him; we are created in Him; we are accepted in Him. It is not enough to say, there is a partnership between the human race and Christ. Christ identifies Himself with the race. The Word is made Flesh; He becomes one with us. He is made like unto His brethren in all things. He lives and dies and rises on our behalf. When He leaves earth, He says: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end."

The solidarity of Christ and the human race. We stand before God as a race, in Christ Jesus. What God will do for us, He will do for us through His

Son. Perhaps the most striking passage bearing upon this great and glorious thought is in that chapter on the resurrection, the Fifteenth of First Corinthians. In the earlier part of the chapter, Paul is speaking of the resurrection of Christ, and is led on to speak of the assurance of the believers in the resurrection; and in the twenty-fourth verse he comes to the thought that believers are the kingdom of Christ. "Then cometh the end, when He [that is, Christ] shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father." Put in just at that point what He said to His disciples: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth"; then read on in the twenty-eighth verse: "When all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." Christ presenting the race as His kingdom to God the Father; and then, God "all in all."

Christ is the beginning and the end of God's purpose for the human race—a grand and glorious truth which we cannot comprehend, but which we may faintly conceive. It assures us of the benevolence and the continuity of the plan of God in the world. God's plan for us, His work among us as He is now dealing with us, must be benevolent, because He is accomplishing that work through Christ, and Christ is the Son of His love. The manifestations of His providence in our lives are manifestations through His Beloved; and He delivers us in Him, and accepts us in Him, and dwells with us in Him. The plan is continuous; it is one plan, from the beginning to the end. God is not correcting mistakes as He goes along, in the redemption of the race or in His deal-

ings with the race. There are no reconstructions, because of blunders. There will be no break in the race because of change of purpose. God will not think of some better plan of dealing with His creatures. How do we know? "The beginning *and the end*"; "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Christ the plan of God for the human race! Christ does not change. There will be advance; but no intermission. When Christ came and the angels sang at Bethlehem, that was not an afterthought of God, unexpected to Him. Redemption was new to men, but not to God. It was His eternal plan; and all history centres in Christ, and all human affairs cohere in Christ. We have our standing in Christ. Through Christ God will work out some eternal plan for good for the race.

3. Another feature of this chapter, and a large feature, is the redemption of character. It is said, that no one shall enter into the city that defileth, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie. It tells of those who are there, and they are the redeemed. "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still." "Righteousness" runs through the whole chapter.

Christ is the beginning and the end of practical righteousness. In His teachings He lays down the principles of right living; in His perfect example He illustrates and emphasizes every virtue. Christ is the divine idea of what every one of us ought to be. Such a character as that of Christ is not for a day. You cannot outgrow, and the world cannot outlive, such holiness as was manifest in Him. It is the Alpha and Omega; it is sublime, not as a pyramid in Egypt is sublime, which represents a local civilization and fits into one

age of the world's history; sublime as the sun in the heavens is sublime—for all ages and for all times. Christ's character is the end of character; there is nothing more. Eternity will not improve on the character which Christ has exemplified for us. John tells us, we shall be like Him. That is the summit, I shall be like Him! All the ages of eternity cannot make me in any particular more holy than Christ. To be Christ-like is all that we ever can be; and we can be Christ-like here and now.

The three elements of His character, obedience, faith and self-sacrifice, may be inwrought into our poor human characters even now, in their beginning. Then the beautiful symmetry of the character of Christ. Other men have exaggerated virtues; they have the Alpha large, and the Omega small, or left out. But in Christ—all; all in due proportion; all well balanced: nothing overdone, and all fused together in the perfect character of the Son of God.

Then if we go out into the larger life of the world and speak of practical righteousness—the righteousness which is embodied in great groups of men: the sufficiency of Christ for all great questions of practical righteousness that comes up before men in their associated life. It is one of the most surprising traits of the character of Jesus Christ and His teachings, that whenever any group of men arise to do something good for the world in the way of practical righteousness, they at once claim Christ as their authority and their pattern. Each age has definite problems peculiar to itself, and each nation; and as every problem comes up, it seems as if Christ came into the world just to settle that question, just to tell men what to do under those circumstances. Wise,

comprehensive, penetrating, wholly adequate, the teachings of Christ have a wonderful capacity for new adaptations in the great moral questions of mankind; and instead of outgrowing this Teacher from Nazareth Who spoke two thousand years ago up and down Judea, the world to-day is pressing forward to overtake, and to exemplify, and to put into practice the truths which He taught. If we take in all the questions that are before us for solution to-day, great questions which divide men, great questions which require wisdom and patience for their solution, it seems as if Christ were looking over the centuries to our age at those questions and telling us what we must do and how we must act in order to solve them aright.

It is so with the individual; Christ is the beginning and the end of the righteousness of each one. Whatever I need to guide me in my little life—the questions of duty that come up before me for settlement—Christ is always sufficient. He is enough for the one; He is enough for the many. Like the fairy tent of which we read in the story—placed in the king's palace, it unfolded into a play-room for the children; taken out into the court-yard, it grew until beneath it could be included the groups of courtiers; transferred to the plain, it expanded until under its mighty canvas all the great armies of the king were sheltered. So the teachings of Christ. John said: "That was the true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world"; as if Christ came into the world to light the individual. We turn to the words of Christ, and He says: "I am the Light of the world." The light fills the little chamber in which I dwell; the light floods the whole world in

which the race lives. The Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of righteousness.

4. Then, once more, this chapter is one of Life, Divine Life. The chapter begins with the river of the water of life, pure as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. It ends with the invitation: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Christ is the beginning and the end of spiritual life. The longing, the deepest longing of the human soul, is for holiness, for life, for peace; the cry of the heart is for the living God. Christ is the beginning; because at conversion He comes into the heart to dwell and to take possession. Christ is the end; because sanctification is simply the fulness of Christ in the believer. The purpose of our life is that Christ may come and dwell with us; that Christ may be the first and the last in our lives. These petty passions, these low desires and impure motives, these appetites, these are not the best things we have.

Cicero tells somewhere in one of his writings of a nobleman's mansion, stately and grand, but empty and forlorn; and he adds: "You could not be persuaded that that edifice was built or intended for the weevils and the mice which abounded in it." Man, made in the image of God, for the indwelling of Christ and the Holy Spirit, was not formed for the thoughts and the feelings which too often find a dwelling-place in his life; but for an habitation of God, through the Spirit.

Oh, Christmas! Christmas! the day when Christ was born; the day when God came to earth and dwelt with men and told men of peace and of glory! Can we find nothing better for this day, for this season,

than an occasion for revelry and sport; a mad rush of worldliness and of work, until body and soul are exhausted? As if the Lord of Glory left His throne and came to a manger in order that mankind might have one more pretext for ministering to the flesh!

Find time during these days for Christ. He has the first claim upon us, in all this rush and whirl. It is more important that we should know Him; that He should live in us; that we should be sure of eternal life through Him, than anything else that could occupy our time and our thoughts.

Important, also, that we should make Him known. Christ is the beginning and end of spiritual life for the whole world. Buddhism is not as good for the Buddhist as Christianity is for the Christian. Paganism is not the power of God unto salvation. Christ is the beginning; not education first, but the gospel. Christ is the end; not that men may be civilized, but that they may be spiritually saved.

Christ needs the whole world to express Him. It is a splendid thought, a glorious vision, that Christ, in His fulness, will not be represented by men on earth until every tribe and kindred and tongue and nation shall come and worship at His feet. Each nation has its peculiarities, its characteristics; and Christ is revealed in each one in a peculiar way. Just as all flowers are flowers, and therefore alike, and yet not alike in their special color and form; just as the sunshine paints each one with its special beauty; as therefore the sunshine needs all the flowers to glorify it and to tell its praise, so there must be the American type of Christianity here; there must be the wonders of divine grace worked out in the African race; the life of Christ must show itself in new

and peculiar features among the Chinese — and so all around the globe, until every tongue and kindred and tribe shall contribute its features and lineaments to the likeness of Jesus Christ; and thus may be revealed unto the world, when all shall have come to Him, “the light of the glory of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

Oh, make Christ the very passion of your life! There is nothing else to live for but Christ! Take the creed of Augustine: “The whole Christ for my salvation; the whole Bible for my staff; the whole church for my fellowship; the whole world for my parish.”

O LORD! Thou art called “Wonderful”; but how wonderful Thou art we never can tell. Thou art wonderful to us, in our little knowledge of Thy love. Thou dost fill us! Though we can comprehend but little, we comprehend enough to fill us with amazement and wonder, as Thou dost come into our lives and give us Thy redemption. Thou art more wonderful than we know; and through eternity it will be our joy to see the wonders of Thy love and Thy grace and Thy power and Thy redemption revealed—revealed in us, revealed in the redeemed, revealed in the great multitude that no man can number, revealed in all the hosts of heaven. O God! prepare us for the wonderful revelation of the future; and that we may be prepared, may we be found in Christ. For His dear Name’s sake we ask it. *Amen.*

III.

CHRIST'S SECRET OF LIFE:

Introductory Sermon

TO THE STUDY BY THE THURSDAY EVENING CLASS

ON "THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST."



Introductory Sermon

TO THE STUDY BY THE THURSDAY EVENING BIBLE
CLASS OF THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST.

Preached February 2nd, 1902.

"In Him was life; and the life was the light of men."—JOHN 1: 4.

WE have all been impressed by two facts concerning Christ; the one fact relates to His life, the other to His influence.

Reading the story of His life we find much that we would expect. The divine wisdom of His teaching, the wonder of His miracles, the holiness of His character, are what we would anticipate in one who was to be called the Son of God. Manifestations of Deity in our Saviour do not surprise us; but when we think of Him as the Son of man we are surprised by a peculiarity on the human side of His nature. I refer to the entire absence in Jesus of any one quality which is conspicuous above all the rest.

As an ideal man, for instance, He exhibited perfect *courage*, and reading the Gospels as an admirer of that virtue, you might describe Him as being, above all else, morally and physically, a brave man. But no sooner have you marked the incidents in which He proved Himself to be the bravest of men, than

another reader, fresh from the Gospel story, proclaims that, whatever Christ was or was not, He was most of all a *humble* man. If you think most of *compassion*, and study Christ for that, you will think that compassionateness was His crowning glory. If you seek in Him for *authority*, you will find no king more absolute than He. Love, faith — independence, submission — strength, gentleness — any one of the qualities which we most admire in man, may for a time seem to have been supreme in our Lord. It is not strange that all these should have reigned in His character; it is strange that no one of them should have been especially prominent. We describe men by their prominent traits. One phrase will sometimes portray a person. Let me say of any man that he is "a man of sorrows," and you have a picture of that man as a whole. These words, as applied to Christ, describes one feature among many. That they are true we know when we see Christ alone in Gethsemane; that they are only a part of the whole truth we realize when we hear the glad merriment of the marriage at Cana, or hear that significant accusation of the Pharisees, "A gluttonous man, a wine-bibber."

This complexity of character — in which all virtues are conspicuous and yet no one conspicuous — must continue to impress us. One word does not describe that character; one stroke of the brush does not paint that portrait.

If we turn from the life to the influence, we are equally moved by a second fact. It is not that His influence should be very great and very good; it is not that He should make those who come into His

presence desire to live a better life; these things we would expect. But the wonderful thing about it all is that the influence of Christ should be so unlimited by sex, by age, by country, by time. In the streets of Jerusalem this fact began to appear. Ignorance trod on the heels of culture in the audience of Jesus. Rabbis were there, and the common people. The woman accused of the worst sin, and the young man who had kept all the commandments, were moved alike by this same Christ, Who seemed to move all. Children came, old men came; the timid sisters of Lazarus, and stern, sturdy John the Baptist—none so old, so young, so good, so bad, but that Christ made them feel that His nature met theirs and had a new power. And so ever since. Athenian philosophers on Mars hill sit in the same school with unlearned children, learning of Christ. Choose any class of men from Asia, a totally different class from Europe, and yet a third and unlike class from our land: they are antipodes in all their ways of thought and life—they shall all alike come under the influence of Christ. Nay, choose individuals from our own midst hopelessly unlike in age, temperament, education, taste. Is there a strong, masculine man; is there a careless, impulsive girl; is there a hard-working man or woman to whom life is a struggle; is there a young man or woman to whom life is fair and bright; is there a little child, is there a grey-haired old man, is there a gloomy, saturnine disposition, is there a happy, mercurial temperament?—they do not harmonize with one another, but they all harmonize with Christ. Think of it. Why does not Christ ever seem old and learned to a child? Why does not Christ ever seem young and childish to the vener-

able man? Why do ignorant men always understand Christ, and yet learned men never outgrow Him? Why does not some cold, unemotional person say that Christ is sentimental and effeminate, or some warm-blooded enthusiast say that Christ lacks feeling?

This influence of our Saviour, without those boundaries which limit all human influence, is a marvellous thing. It is this which makes Him young to the young and old to the old, simple to the plain man and profound to the scholar, strong to those who love strength and gentle to those who need sympathy. It is this which makes it hard for us to think of Him as a Jew, and to place Him two thousand years back; leading us to feel rather that He is not out of place in our own nation and our own time.

These two facts, then, are the important facts about Christ. They are, indeed, the important facts about any man. What he is in himself; What he is to others: these things tell the story of any soul. It is this combination in Christ of what John calls Life and Light, which makes Him competent to be our Guide. "In Him was life;" not *a* life, but all life; not a few prominent qualities, such as make up your life and mine, but every quality which a perfect life calls for. Whatever virtues we observe or think of, and say: "This man's life is good because he has this virtue; that man's because he has that"—all these were in Christ; and so "in Him was life"—complete, perfect life.

"And the life was the light of men." That is the influence, the power of the life upon others; and its beauty is, as we have seen, that it is the light of

men — of all mankind, of the race; skipping no age, class or condition, leaving no individual in darkness.

What, then, is Christ's secret of life, which is to be our light?

I. First of all, our Saviour was never perplexed by the strange things about life; never puzzled by what He saw happening in the lives of people about Him. I do not find in the Gospels the first hint that He ever paused before any man, woman or child, and asked the question: "Why does this thing happen to this person?" You and I are always making that inquiry. That little word "why" is all the time on our lips, or in our hearts. Why this — why that — why not some other thing? The mysteries of life confuse us, and we stand perplexed in their presence. And if we turn from our own perplexity to the calmness of Christ as He deals with all forms of human experience, we do not find that He stops to explain it all. We find only this, that in the eyes of Christ it is not the unexpected that happens; that the experiences which He sees in the lives of friends and foes never astonish Him, but are accepted without question. The Disciples were surprised, but not Christ. As if your boy, who had gone to school thinking the road to learning easy to travel, should come home surprised and grieved because grammar and arithmetic are hard to master; and you should take that fact with composure, because you have been through it all and learned the truth.

Take a single incident from John's Gospel, for illustration. The Disciples stand astonished before one of the mysteries of life — a miserable beggar sits at the Temple gate asking alms. Why should any

of God's children be shut out from the world's beauty and the light of day? Why this man rather than some other? "Master! who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Who of us have not asked some such question, as we have compared the blessings and the afflictions which seem to be so partially distributed in the world? But Christ was not confused. It did not seem a mystery to Him. He was not puzzled that this man, rather than another, should have been born blind. And He did not explain. He only told His followers that their hesitating explanations were wrong. Neither this man's sin, nor his parents', had caused his affliction; but by means of it the works of God should be made manifest. And He restored his sight.

Such incidents were constantly happening in the life of our Saviour. He was constantly meeting strange enigmas in the fortunes of men about Him — hypocrites who deserved nothing and enjoyed everything; afflicted ones with many virtues and few blessings. Nay, His own life was strangest of all — the best Man among them suffering the hardest lot! And all this never once seemed to strike Him as a strange thing!

In a word, Christ's first idea concerning life is that it requires no explanation. So far as its surroundings are concerned, there is nothing mysterious about it. The blessings which come to one man rather than to another; the trials which visit this home rather than that; the apparent injustices and inequalities which appear on all sides, are not things to perplex, but to be taken as matters of course. I will not say that Christ always understood them. He may have known why the rich man was rich, the

poor man poor, the lame man lame, the blind man blind. But whether He knew or not, He was never disturbed. The accidents and incidents of life always seemed to Him to be right.

We must have noticed this in our Saviour; and when we have noticed it, what shall we say of it? What but this, that the circumstances of life are not by chance but by plan; that nothing in life is strange because nothing is accidental; in short, that there is no life which the Life-giver ever loses out of His sight.

This is the starting-point in Christ's secret of life. Everything springs from this. And this explains why Christ never paused to ask why things were so in the lives about Him. There was a plan, a purpose, a clean-cut design in all this apparent jumble of contradictions. God is present in human life; and where God is there can be no wrong.

If we do not begin here, can we make anything out of life? Shall we not, like the Disciples, be continually asking: "What has this man done, or his ancestors, that this thing should come to him?" Nothing but Christ's secret can give us His calmness. Take that first fact, God always present in human life; and you never need be amazed at the fortunes and misfortunes. Remember that He who gave life cares for life, every life, every moment, and you may stand like Christ, calm and at rest, amid all the chances and changes. You must carry that secret into your own personal experience, if you would reach the peace that passeth understanding.

II. But this is only the beginning.

If our Lord left us here, He would leave us

trustful, but inactive. The thought of God's care of life helps us; but there is a thought beyond, more inspiring still. Let us get this too from the acts of Jesus. I ask you to think, for this purpose, of how He dealt with the pleasures and the pains of men.

Have you ever marked how skillful He was in helping persons who were sad and persons who were happy? The great evil to be avoided in such cases is that of making either sorrow or happiness the chief and final thought in mind. If you make a sufferer think more about his suffering; if you cause him to feel that pain is the one great evil of life; or if you make the one who is happy think that happiness is the best thing that he can have; that to be happy is to attain the end of life, you do harm, not good. In our well meant sympathy for people we often nurse their sorrow. By too much talking with them about their trials we make them think too much of what they suffer. Their mind dwells upon misfortune till misfortune seems the worst evil in life. By our well meant sympathy, too, we often cherish wrong ideas of the pleasure of life. We say to our friends: "May your life be perfectly happy!"—a questionable blessing for any. We encourage the fancy that to have everything agreeable in life is to have life successful; and so enjoyment becomes the highest good.

In contrast, mark how Christ dealt with sorrow and joy. No one ever, indeed, more deeply sympathetic than He who wept with the sisters at Bethany and feasted with the company at Cana; but we can not read the story of His miracles and parables without seeing how both suffering and enjoyment were to Him only means to something else. He always went beyond them. He never, in all His miracles,

left men thinking that to suffer pain was the worst evil that could happen to a child of God. He never, in all His feastings, left men thinking that the end of existence is to enjoy life.

How many proofs of this crowd the Gospel page. He found one day at Capernaum a man — perhaps an old man — shaking with the palsy. The man was thinking of what he was suffering; all the people were thinking of the same. They looked to Christ to cure him. Was it not almost cruel in Him to look down upon that sick bed and, seeming to have no thought of the pain, to say: "Son! be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee"? "Good cheer," indeed! And yet, there was a new fact for that man. Palsy was not the worst evil after all. He might have that and good cheer also. And when Christ left him, cured and strong, the uppermost thought in that man's mind was not of sickness, but of forgiveness.

Christ always did so. Whichever miracle we read we discover that, in some way, Christ made men feel that while He relieved pain He could do something better for them than that. They came to Him thinking of their bodies; they left Him, and behold! they were thinking of their souls. Once He burst out with the words: "Take no thought for the body." He told His Disciples that in the world they should have tribulation; but, also, "My joy." They might have both.

Christ dealt with pleasure in the same way. Not once did He treat happiness as a forbidden thing; but He always went beyond it. One day the Disciples came to Christ very happy: a new joy had come into their lives. They could work miracles; and even the devils were subject to them. There

was a look of joy in His face, as He turned to them and said: "Do not rejoice so much in that; rejoice, rather, that your names are written in heaven." One day He told them the story of a man who became very rich—his business prospered and his barns overflowed, and he built larger storehouses wherein to store his goods. There is not the faintest hint that the man was a bad man; but he thought the end of life was enjoyment, as millions do to-day—simply to gather. And Christ taught, that to enjoy life is not life's end. "This night, thy soul shall be required of thee."

Enough said. The second secret of Christ's idea of life is plain. The way in which He entered heartily into men's sorrows and joys, and yet made them feel that there was something more important for them to think of than these, gives us the secret. It is the idea of the spiritual end of life. Life is given us for the development of the soul. To suffer is not the greatest evil. To enjoy is not the greatest good. The greatest evil is sin; and the greatest good is to serve God. The soul is more than the body. We say it: do we believe it? There are young people here to-day looking out into life wondering what it will bring. I hope it will bring much joy and delight. There are old people looking backward and forward, and even now summing up the profit and the loss of life. There are all the ages between. But wherever we stand to-day, let us remember this, in the light of our text, that the one great end for which we are in the world is not to escape so much suffering; is not to attain so much pleasure; but to be delivered from the power of sin, and to be made meet for our inheritance beyond. If all we get out

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of life is a living; if we only gain pleasure and avoid pain, we are wasting life. We are like men walking around the circular track. We take many happy steps and many weary ones; but the end finds us just where we were at the beginning.

III. If the end of life is spiritual; if its object be not to escape pain and to attain pleasure, but rather to escape sin and to attain holiness, by what method are we to secure the desired end? What was the secret of Christ, in answer to this inquiry?

We shall find an answer in what Christ said about Himself. How absolute He was in His claims! Eighteen centuries of Christian life have not caused us to forget the imperative tones in which He addressed men. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." What supreme self-belief! "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me." "He that will not leave houses and lands, wife and children, all that he hath, for My sake, cannot be My disciple." What divine audacity! No wonder that men crucified Christ for His claims!

And yet, here is Christ's third chief idea concerning life, that it should be a personal and complete consecration to Him. His life my life. You will find this the central truth of all His words. It runs through all His acts. Every life is to find its light in Christ. See how uncompromising He is; how He refuses to lower His terms. One day a young man came to Him and asked what he must do to have eternal life. Evidently that young man had reached Christ's second idea, that the end of life is spiritual, and Christ asked Him what means he had used to attain

that end. The inquirer replied, that he had kept all the commandments. And our Saviour made no objection to that; but led the young man on to a new idea. And what is it? Exactly this third idea of which we are speaking. "Do one thing more, follow Me; consecrate your life to Me; give up what I ask you to give up, and come and be My disciple, and eternal life shall be yours." He makes His demands very plain, but very strict. He will not lower the terms; He will not negotiate. And though He loves the young man, He suffers him to go away sorrowful; for he will not come up to the Saviour's idea of life.

Discipleship, self-surrender, consecration — not to a law, not to a creed, not to a church; but to a person, and that person Jesus Christ — here is our Saviour's ultimate idea of life. "I am the Vine, ye are the branches; abide in Me." "I am the Shepherd, ye are the sheep; follow Me." "Whosoever believeth on Me, hath everlasting life." On every page of the Gospels; in every miracle He worked; in every parable He spoke; by way of command; by way of invitation; by way of entreaty; and even by way of prayer, does our Saviour repeat and reiterate this for ever important truth, that if we are to attain the end of life, we must attain it in Jesus Christ. And the one dreadful word which He pronounces over those lives which are not given to Him, is that one short word — "Lost!"

What a glorious thing it may be to live! My life may be Christ's life in me. My poor life may be under the constant guidance of divine love, wisdom and power, as I commit it in all its interests to Him. Then, in life and by life,

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I may be seeking the highest end, spiritual life; and by life I may glorify Him Who gave me life, and may reveal something of the love of Him Who redeems my life. Then, my life given to Him and taken up into His, even here and now, in this world, may be the beginning of that eternal life which He has promised. Thus I fulfill Christ's plan for my life; and He who is the life and the light of men becomes my life and my light.

HEREIN is love, O God, not that we loved Thee, but that Thou didst love us. Herein is life, not that we have it of ourselves, but that we may have it from Jesus Christ. Life is Thy gift. We beseech Thee that Thou wilt bestow it. O Lord! as we have to receive it, give us grace that we may accept it; and to-day in Jesus Christ may our life be redeemed from sin unto holiness. We ask it in His name and for His sake. *Amen.*

IV.

Easter Morning Sermon.



Easter Morning Sermon.

Preached March 30th, 1902.

(Principally the clause) "*That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection.*"—PHIL. 3: 10, 11.

PAUL here reaches the summit toward which he has been climbing in the previous verses and chapters. There are mountains in Switzerland which would make the fame of any ordinary landscape, but which gathered about Mount Blanc are little heeded; but the climber reaches Mount Blanc over these little hills. So we climb over the Sermon on the Mount, and the simple parables, and many of the conversations of Christ, to the height of that discourse at the Last Supper.

The blessing of little children is the first hillock on which we step, as we ascend to the great mount of the salvation of the world. The lesser miracles—water changed into wine, the healing of the lame, the sick, the lepers and the blind, the raising of Lazarus—are the steps by which we ascend until we stand on this towering peak of the Resurrection of Christ.

Exultant and triumphant, Paul stands on that lofty elevation in our text: "*That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection.*"

I. There is power in the very position itself. You stand on the highest peak of Christian truth;

you look down and you see clearly and fully all the other distinctive truths of Christianity. To a mind perplexed as to the deity of Christ, as to the authority of His teachings, as to the reality of His lesser miracles, as to the power of His precious blood, this fact which comes to our thought to-day, that He rose from the dead by His own power, brings great comfort and assurance.

He so clearly foretold this, months in advance. And the historical fact of His rising from the dead is so incontestably established — “the best attested fact in history,” some one says. The power was so manifestly His own. Peter declared on the day of Pentecost: “It was not possible that He should be holden of death.” Dead; but not able to continue dead. The world has never made much of the raising of Lazarus, or of the son of the widow of Nain. We never say *they* brought life and immortality to light by their resurrection. There is a resurrection power that works from without, and that was the power that raised the ruler's daughter and the Shunamite's son. Then there is a resurrection power that works from within; it is divine, and Christ had it. Somehow, His life was in His own keeping. “I lay down My life and I take it again; no man taketh it from Me.” Something from without raised Lazarus. Christ arose. “In Him was life.” “It was not possible that He should be holden of death.”

Now to the logical mind of Paul this power of the resurrection comes with all the power of conclusive proof; and to every thinking man who ponders on the truths of Christianity and stands in the light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ there is a convincing power in that fact to carry with it all the

great truths of the Christian religion. Resurrection was the crowning proof that Christ was the Son of God — all that He claimed to be. If He could conquer death, then He could conquer sin, and His sacrifice was accepted of God. Resurrection is the key to all the sayings of Christ and His holy example. It proves our life and immortality: "Because I live, ye shall live also." It carries with it all the lesser miracles. Is any one troubled, from any point of view, because of the difficulty of accepting the miracles of the Bible, and do you stand to-day and accept this greatest of all miracles, the resurrection? A quaint writer says: "The resurrection is like the door of Noah's ark: if large enough for the elephant to enter, then all the other animals could enter too. If the resurrection is accepted, there is nothing in the Bible that is difficult of acceptance, in the way of the supernatural. If the door is large enough for that miracle, it is large enough for all." Is it hard sometimes to believe? do you have doubts? Then re-write your creed; and begin here with this truth: "I believe in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe in life and immortality." Everything is easy after that. It is easy to write then: "I believe in God the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord." It is easy after that to write: "I believe He ever liveth to make intercession. I believe in the precious blood and the life eternal."

The power of His resurrection — "that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection."

The power of His resurrection is the power to make us know Him. It was a skeptic who said, when some

friend came and proposed to establish some new religion: "Go and get yourself crucified, and rise again the third day, and then men will believe in your religion." It was a skeptic who said it; but he recognized the convincing power, the logical strength of the fact of Christ's resurrection. And it is here that Christian faith drops its anchor; and the anchor holds. And as we stand by Christ after the resurrection, as Thomas did, we can say, as Thomas said: "My Lord, and my God."

II. The power of the resurrection is the power of spiritual life. To know this power of the resurrection of Christ is to be conscious that the same power which raised Him from the dead is working in us. The resurrection stands for this in the teachings of the Scriptures, that the Christian life is a new life. It is a risen life; a life created by the power of God. When we invite people to come to Christ, to be Christians, we do not invite them to try to be a little better. We ask them to let Christ in to re-create their affections, their motives, their ambitions, their whole life. It is not what I am trying to do, or to be. It is the divine power in me, raising me spiritually to life. I receive salvation; I receive the power to do God's will. I receive faith, and my joy and my peace and my love for Christ; and all the exercises of the Christian faith are given me, bestowed upon me, created in me, by this resurrection power of Christ. So I say: "*I* am not doing this; God is working in me; it is the power of the resurrection." Do not think that being a Christian is keeping a few commandments a little better than the world keeps them. Being a Christian is a transaction of love and

faith—a spiritual engagement between the human soul and the divine Lord. It is Christ saving the Christian. It is Christ empowering the Christian. John Brown, of Haddington, said: “I trust no more in my own labors for my salvation, than I do in my sins. My only hope is in the finished work of Jesus Christ.”

And the power of Christian living is divine power. Learn the secret of that; remember it. Not you, but Christ, living your life. Give Him your weakness, your ignorance, your temper, your plans, your motives, your brains, yourself. Let Him fight the fight for you. You say, you do not understand that; you do not know what it means. That is why I am preaching it, that you may know Christ, and the power of His resurrection. Let Christ tell you what to think, what to feel, what to do. Let Christ be your strength. Let Himself take the place of yourself. You cannot understand it? Then ask for it. Seek it. Do not be satisfied with any Christian life that is less than “Christ liveth in me.” The believer lives by the spiritual power of Christ in him. It is a new, a risen life. It is different from the old life; it must be. Let the Church ever bear in mind this, and insist on it, that the Christian life is distinctly unlike the life of the world; the old things have passed away. To live in the power of the resurrection is to make another world the standard of living in this world. “The Christian does not look up from earth to heaven; he looks down from heaven to earth.” We are to look upon the things of the world as we shall look back upon them from the resurrection morning. How sweet then will everything seem in our lives that was Christlike and good!

How glad we shall be for every sacrifice we ever made! How small will look some of the prizes of the world which we coveted and for which we almost betrayed our Master! How mean and contemptible will seem our selfishness, our little ambition! Shame on us, if we are called disciples of Christ and yet are making this world everything, and are seeking the easiest and the pleasantest places, and are no different in our inner life from the world about us; are satisfied with a form of religion and are denying its power, are not giving ourselves, as we have covenanted to do, to our Lord and Saviour and His service!

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.” A risen life for the world — newness of life for mankind, after the image of Christ: is that a dream incapable of realization?

It is very significant that Christ, after His resurrection, said nothing about His persecutors. In all that He said during those forty days, so far as we know, not a word concerning the treachery of Judas, the animosity of the Scribes, the injustice and the cruelty of the Crucifixion. The past seemed lost to His mind, He had done with it; and in the resurrection days we live in an atmosphere of peace and good will. Christ talks of the welfare of His Disciples, and of their going and preaching His Gospel to save the world. This is the power of the resurrection, to obliterate animosities and to set man to saving his fellow man. The resurrection power is not in the world to-day. Men are tightening their belts and setting their teeth, and are more fiercely determined than ever to pull one another down. As we look out over trade and society, politics, domestic,

public and private life, we are reminded of nothing so much as the little interview between Joab and Amasa. "And Joab said to Amasa, Art thou in health, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him. But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth rib...and he died." Those cruel sons of Zeruiah! "They are too hard for me," said David. They are too hard for any Christian. There are battles enough to be fought to-day, public and private, that are righteous—battles against sin and vice and evil; but oh, man's inhumanity to man! The cruelty of it; the shame of it! Another Easter come, and the heathen nations of the world are all at peace one with another; and the two greatest "Christian" nations of the world waging relentless and wicked war upon inferior races! Another Easter come, and the strife between the laborer and his employer more deadly and bitter and hateful than ever! Another Easter come, and the great world-principle of self-exaltation and self-gratification established more firmly than ever! And this is Christ's world! The world needs the power of His resurrection; the power of Him Who said, "Whatsoever ye would"; Who said, "Thou shalt love"; Who said, "He that will lose his life for My sake shall save it"; Who went about doing good; Who came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them; and the law of Whose own life was sacrifice!

If the world is to feel the power of the resurrection, the Church must feel it. Christ's people must lead a risen life. The power of the resurrection in the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ—living illustrations of the Sermon on the Mount—a spiritual people, holy, who will dare to practice the precepts

of their Lord; who will say to the world: "Your standards may be wise; but they are not Christian. Your methods may be plausible and expedient; but they are not Christian. Your statesmanship may be grand and impressive; but it is contrary to the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. The whole spirit of your life is of the earth, earthy. We cannot go with you. We reject your standards. We will not have your compromise with sin. We have something better to offer you. We are willing to go with Christ without the camp, and to bear His reproach, if need be. We are willing to follow Him and take what loss may come."

A risen Church—no longer indistinguishable from the world, but utterly unlike the world! Would it not be strange if the Church, instead of seeking to win the world, instead of letting down its standards to please the world, instead of giving up this holy doctrine in order to win the assent of the world—would it not be strange if the Church should be, as Christ has commanded her to be, a holy and separate people, true to Him, come gain or loss? It would be so foolish. There would be nothing worldlywise about it. Thousands would prophesy the downfall of the Church. It would not be popular. And it would overcome the world!

III. The resurrection power is the power of a glorious hope. "He is not here; He is risen." The resurrection shows the place of death in the career of men. We die—not away from life, but into life. The resurrection puts death in the right place. It says to the body: "Earth to earth; ashes to ashes; dust to dust. Lie there for a time; there is where

you belong." But it says to the spirit: "The things that are unseen are eternal." "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Loved ones have passed from us. It makes heaven bright, does it not? Perhaps the best part of our life is up there with them.

Only the heart has wings
That tire not nor decay;
All other, mortal things
Grow old, and pass away.

We do not sit and gaze into heaven and sorrow as those who have no hope. We take up the duties of life, and we try to do as we may what God has given us to do, as we realize also that the best things are not here. We remember that what we have to do must be done soon, because the time is short. We have great comfort in it all.

Be comforted,
And like a cheerful traveller take the road,
Singing beside the hedge. What if the bread
Be bitter in the inn, and thou unshod
To meet the flints? At least it may be said:
"Because the way is short, I thank thee, Lord."
Yet a little while,
Yet a little way,
Saints shall reap and rest and smile all the day.
Up! let's trudge another mile.

IV. The power of the resurrection is the power of an endless life. We already feel the pull of heavenly things. Already we are the sons of God. We walk with Him here and now. The dominant note in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ was "otherworldliness." The spirit of His life was the heavenly spirit. He lived the human life in a frame of mind that was divine. His teachings have to do with the great spiritual truths. His two great themes are

personal salvation and the work of saving others. Around these two great truths circle all His enthusiasm, all His teaching and all His work. Temporal things He passed over lightly. They are merely the incidents by the way. The man who would rise higher than the level of this world must be heavenly minded. The three great men of the Old Testament, Abraham the pilgrim, Moses the deliverer, and David the sweet singer and psalmist, while they were men of intense activity in the affairs of the world, lived and moved and had their being in God. The three great men of the New Testament, John the beloved, Peter the impetuous, and Paul, the greatest of the three, all faithful in their day and generation in the work which God gave them to do; and yet their life was utterly hid with Christ in God.

The power of the resurrection. We must look to the great future, if we are to live aright. There is a little future. Most people are concerned in the little future — to-morrow and next day; but it is the great future that we are to look to. We need all the inspiration for the living of this life which can come from the great truth which comes to our hearts to-day.

In a little, low room, in his house in Boston, was the study of the capacious scholar and stimulating writer, John Fiske. Over his mantel was the motto of his life: "Study as if you were to live for ever; live as if you were to die to-morrow." Why not? We are not to adjust ourselves to one world and that the transient; nor to the threescore years and ten. The great Gibbon said: "The humblest worm that crawls on the most magnificent palace is greater than the pal-

ace, more wonderfully made; it has life." Jesus Christ pointed to the Temple at Jerusalem and said: "There shall not be left here one stone upon another"; and then, pointing to Himself: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it again." That is the difference between things material and things spiritual. Shall we live for the stones that shall not be left one upon another in a few years? "Because I live, ye shall live also." "I am the resurrection and the life." See how the Son of God gathers up into Himself everything—life, light, resurrection, redemption, justification: whatever stands for and ministers to the spiritual and eternal welfare of men, Christ is that. He does not give it; He *is* it.

"I am the resurrection and the life." So the great thing of life, the great end of life, is to know Christ. "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection." This is the old message. It comes to us again and again, always sweet, and always blessed and inspiring. It comes constantly with its contrasts. The mortal, immortality. This corruptible, incorruption. Things seen and temporal, things unseen and eternal. The natural body, the spiritual body. Pilgrims and strangers, heirs of God. Death, life. Defeat, victory. Go back to the life of the week and live as a child of God. Do not pursue bubbles and shadows. Do not seek first that which ministers to the lower nature and the lower things; seek a life that is hid—"hid with Christ in God." Then carry the spirit of heaven into all the doings of earth. In it all, have the joy and the peace which always come to such a life.

A satisfied heart—satisfied with God; satisfied with what God is, and satisfied with what He

bestows. Content with the best things; because God always gives the best things to such a life. Awaiting life, until the day break and the shadows flee away. Doing with the might what the hands find to do, for His sake and for His glory. Enduring as seeing Him Who is invisible. And always looking for the city which hath foundations, whose builder and whose maker is God—the city toward which we hasten.

O LORD! Thou art the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: without Thee, we can do nothing. We pray Thee that Thou wilt this day reveal to us, and in us, and through us the power of the resurrection. That Thou wilt reveal unto us what it is to be sons of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. That Thou wilt deliver us from the earthly, and set within our hearts the heavenly. May we be pilgrims, ever cherishing the pilgrim spirit, with a song on our lips and in our hearts, doing with our might what Thou givest us to do, yet looking for the city which hath foundations, knowing that here we have no abiding-place; walking constantly with God, following the footsteps of Jesus Christ, pleasing Him, seeking His glory. O God! give us this, and we have enough.
Amen.

v.

Spiritual Things Spirit-
ually Discerned.



Spiritual Things Spiritually Discerned.

Preached Sunday Morning, June 8th, 1902.

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."—I COR. 2: 12-14.

THE three principal facts in these verses, which combine to make up the general instruction of the passage, are these: First—There is a special field of knowledge, separate from all other fields, which we may call "spiritual knowledge"; or, as Paul calls it here, "the things of the Spirit." Second—There is in man a special power or faculty for appropriating this knowledge. Paul calls this power, "the spirit which is of God." It is the spiritual faculty. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; because they are spiritually discerned." Third—Then, in order that man may by his spiritual faculty apprehend this spiritual knowledge, the Holy Spirit is given as his teacher. "Which

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things we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth."

Let us pause for a moment and get it clearly in our minds, before we make the application. For any kind of knowledge, there is necessary a prepared instrument, or faculty. Let me illustrate. Here is a diamond, sparkling and lustrous. You say: "It is a perfect gem." But some one from the laboratory comes to you and hands you a magnifying glass, and asks you to look through it at the gem. You see at the very centre of the gem a black spot. He says: "True, the natural eye cannot perceive; these things are microscopically discerned."

You take up a book and open at a certain page. The page is a great tangle of mathematical symbols, a jumble of plus and minus signs and decimals and characters of strange appearance; and you say: "The printer surely was mad when he set the copy." The mathematical professor looks over your shoulder, and says: "Beautiful problem!" You remember that mathematical things are mathematically discerned.

There are two men at a musical concert. One yawns, scans the program wearily, looks at his watch, and mutters: "When will all this be done?" The other sits enraptured. "I would that this might go on for ever." Musical things are musically discerned.

Except a man be born again, he cannot see any kingdom that he desires to see; into that kingdom he must be born — music, mathematics, architecture, commerce, agriculture or religion. What has God done for revelation? He has condescended to give us a Book, and in that Book has written His message. In that Book we learn our destiny and our

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duty. He has told us of His love, His grace, His plan of salvation, the great hereafter with its rewards and punishments. Then He says: "Here is truth, My truth." He has created within us a power to appropriate that truth. Then He sends His Holy Spirit to instruct us and to reveal it to us. Only God can reveal spiritual truth; and only a spirit can receive spiritual truth. God declares to us: "I have something to say to you. It is something which your natural understanding cannot grasp; therefore I will give you a faculty to receive it. Then I will send the Holy Spirit to reveal it to your spirit."

Could anything be more complete? Does this mean that we must, if we are to understand religious truth, open our hearts as well as our minds? It means just that. Does it mean that we should approach this Word of God with our conscience as well as with our intellect? Does it mean that all the teachings of the Bible are nothing but religious puzzles, mysteries, if apprehended by the intellect alone; but the light of our path, our everlasting joy, if taken to our souls? Nothing could be more reasonable than God's ways of dealing with us, and nothing more benevolent and good. We do not solve mathematics with our musical faculties. We do not ask a physician to practice law in the courts. The appropriate faculty for the appropriate work. The spirit of man is made for spiritual truth; just as the wings of the bird are made for the air. God says: "Come to Me spiritually, and the Holy Spirit shall be your guide."

That, then, is the fact. Now, *What are "the things of the Spirit" which are spiritually discerned?*

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I. There is the central question of personal salvation. It is the greatest question any man can ask: "How can I be reconciled with God? how may I, a sinner, be pardoned and redeemed and made holy and prepared for companionship with God for ever?" There is an answer to that question, and there is only one true answer. There is a sense in which the human understanding can take in that answer. For example: I am guilty before God. God is my Creator; God has sent Jesus Christ to die for me; on the Cross He has won my pardon, and by His life in me I am to be made holy and redeemed unto God, and so become a child of God. The human understanding can take in those propositions; but if that is all, religion is a puzzle and a distress. Why are men always quarrelling with the Gospel of God's grace? Why is the human understanding always rejecting it? What do we need? Why is it that the head is continually disputing the terms which God makes for our salvation, while the heart is always crying out for salvation? "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; because they are spiritually discerned."

What will you do with the Cross of Jesus Christ? The very worst thing you can do with it is to make it a subject of dispute. One of the worst things you can do with it is to try to explain it to the natural understanding. Embrace it; love it; cling to it as your only hope. Then you will understand the Cross. Did He bear our punishment? "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Was the sacrifice of Christ necessary for our salvation? "Without

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the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin." But did He take our place before God on the Cross? Who can answer, if not He Himself? "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." There is a language of the heart, and the heart knows the Cross of Jesus Christ. Get down to the point of helplessness and of sin and guilt; get down to the point where there is no eye to pity and no power to save, and reach out by faith to the Cross; and there isn't a verse in the Bible about the blessed Atonement but what you will say of it: "Yes, I know it all; it has taken place in my soul!"

CHRIST OUR SACRIFICE! This is the very heart of the Gospel; the centre of the Bible of God. We do not try to understand mathematics without the mathematical faculty. We do not ask a machinist to teach us law. We do not go to the architect for philosophy. Why should we go to an unbeliever for religious truth? I will bow down humbly before the men of science when they talk to me on questions in which they are experts; but when one is to speak to me about my Saviour, about Christ crucified, about the way I may attain eternal life, I want to listen to men who have walked with God; to men who have waited long with the Holy Spirit; and to men who have themselves been crucified with Christ. I will listen to the man of great intellectual power when he delves into logic and speculations; but when a man is to write my religious creed and the creed of the Church, I want a man who has been saturated in his inner experience with the Holy Spirit; who has listened by the gates of God for truth—the holiest, saintliest, Christliest man in all the Church. We may know the things

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that concern our eternal peace; we may know the things of the Spirit; but we may not know them by going for instruction to men who know nothing about them. Do not go to the skeptic for religious instruction; go to the infidel for infidelity, if you want it; go to the skeptic for skepticism, for he is an expert therein. But when you want religious truth, go to the very humblest believer—a man uneducated, if you please, in worldly lore, but who has waited before God and heard Him speak.

But, you may say: "May I not have both? May we not have the intellectual and the spiritual also?" We may not only have both in one, but the only rational man is the religious man; and the more a man's intellectual faculties are developed along with the spiritual, the greater is his power to open his understanding to the truth of God. When Agassiz, that prince of scientists, talked to the learned world about natural law and gravitation and light and evolution, the whole world listened. But Agassiz spoke the wisest words when he said: "Talk not of light, gravitation, natural law or evolution; these are the pens in an unseen Hand: talk of that Hand—God's hand, that holds them."

What are "the things of the Spirit," which are spiritually discerned?

II. PRAYER. Prayer has been argued about, talked about and discussed; but we do not learn prayer in that way. The natural man cannot pray; he does not want to pray. Prayer is not an attractive exercise; and he has great learned doubts about the efficacy of prayer, and very profoundly and wisely he tells you of them. But to one who has learned to

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pray, prayer is "the simplest form of speech that infant lips can try." It is a beautiful allegory that the Angel of prayer weaves crowns for God out of the prayers of Israel.

That is a thrilling ending to the Fourth chapter of Genesis, a bright light in the midst of the darkness. God had created the world. Man had been put into the Garden; had sinned and been driven out. Then came Cain and Abel, and then Seth was born. And at the very close of the Fourth chapter, after all this trouble and guilt, we read: "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." The beginning of prayer is the life of the human race. The inevitableness of prayer; because man is a sinner, helpless, and must find God. Could anything be finer: "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord"!

There is very little profit in trying to understand the mystery of prayer. It does not trouble us. Do not be disheartened if you cannot pray as you would, or if you cannot pray as you hear other people pray. Do not be disheartened if your prayers seem for a time to be unanswered; keep on praying. Oh, for a praying Church! The spiritual power of the Church is prayer-power: when will we learn it? I rejoice in the splendid activities of this day in which we live. Never was man so conscious of his powers as he is to-day. It is a great day of achievements. Man to-day exults in his power to do; and he proves his power to do in what he accomplishes. It is a great age in which to live. The Church has caught something of that spirit; perhaps the world has caught it from the Church. It is a day of endeavor in religious things. It is a day of strenuous activity. The Church in many ways is putting on her strength. If

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also with this we have a sense of dependence on God — humility with it all — the consciousness that when we are weak we are strong — a constant waiting at His gates!

This is not a human undertaking in which we are engaged; it is a divine work, and must be accomplished in divine power. Therefore, not only must man pray that God Himself will work in the world by divine power; but man's power to do his own work for God in the world depends upon his prayer. An age of strenuous activity; but if that activity is to come to wise ends and produce benevolent results, man's very power to accomplish those results depends on his keeping close to God. The natural man worships strength — human strength. The spiritual man must accompany him, to show him his spiritual power and correct his misunderstandings. All the difficulties of the Church are solved by prayer. Lord! teach us to pray: teach Thy Church to pray!

III. There is always a spiritual side to practical affairs. Our daily work brings us into contact with many classes. We deal with matters which are not religious; and yet, as we come to deal with them, we find that they call for the exercise of conscience. We find they are questions of human responsibility and obligation to our fellow-men and our God. After all, every question which we have to solve is at bottom a question of right or wrong. You cannot get the moral element out of life. We must separate and distinguish and discriminate and see where the real essence of every question is. The Holy Spirit enables us to discern the spiritual in the practical.

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The natural man does not usually see the religious element in the questions that come before him. For example, in the conduct of his business, he says: "Business is business." The natural man sees only the worldly, secular side; but the spiritual discernment enables a man to see that his business is to be conducted for the glory of God, and that he can serve God on the street and in his counting-room, or on his ranch, or in his study, or wherever he may be. Prosperity; the question of the use of property. The natural man says he will acquire everything he can in the way of property; honestly if he can, but he will acquire it. Then he will use it as he pleases; it is his to enjoy. The spiritual man discerns that he is a steward, and that God will some time call him to account for the use that he has made of the talents entrusted to his keeping.

Is there anything that is not a spiritual question? The way we use our tongues, our minds, our time; the way we deal with our fellow-men; the spirit in which we do our work. Whether we eat or drink, or play, or worship, or whatever we do, may we not do it to the glory of God? Take, for example, understanding the providences of God, or discerning the spiritual element in God's dealings with us — prosperity and adversity; joys and sorrows; all the training, schooling, which God gives us. It falls upon the natural man, and it is good or bad fortune, luck, chance, or something of that kind; and he does not discern the meaning of it all. We need the spiritual understanding to trace God's way in our lives. The Reason examines these circumstances of life, and says: "Verily, Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour!" The natural man

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perceiveth it not. Then the spiritual man looks at it, and says: "It is all plain: 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want'; 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him'; 'The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'" As he is led of the Spirit of God, he sees more and more of God in his life. All that comes to him and the training that develops him—it is all of God. Every gift is a good and perfect gift, and all the will of God is "that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Nearly all the great questions of public interest which affect us as a nation are essentially moral and religious questions. Questions of legislation, questions of social relationship, questions of reform, questions of dealing with foreign nations; whether it be in the administration of the city, of the state, or of the nation; whether it be international relations the world over—all these questions which are agitating the politicians and statesmen, are really at bottom questions which need for their solution spiritual discernment. The natural man says the Filipino question is simply a question of revenue; the spiritual man says it is a question of eternal righteousness. The natural man says that the Temperance question is to be settled on the basis of expediency and good fellowship; the spiritual man says that the question in its very core is a question of men's loyalty to God, an eternal question of right and wrong. When he presents it in that light the natural man will not listen to it. There is the very heart of the whole matter. The man needs spiritual discernment to determine his relation to that great reform. The natural man talks about the advantages of war, the blessings which

follow it, and discusses it on the basis of worldly wisdom; the spiritual man goes back to Christ and listens to His teachings. It is remarkable how almost every question that comes before us as a community, in which we have to decide our relations to one another and our actions as regards our fellow-men, when we get down to the centre of it, is a question of whether we will do right or wrong; whether we will choose evil or good; whether we will serve God or Satan. We need as a people, and we need it to-day, in this material age—an age of gold and prosperity—a sensitive conscience and a tender heart. We need spiritual discernment. We need the power which comes from God, to look below the surface of these matters of political and other economy, and see down to the heart of them, and to discern our true relation to our fellow-men and our true relation to God.

Prominently so in the Church. All the questions that affect the interest of the Church are, at heart, spiritual. I mean, the temporal administration of the Church, and those matters which we do not usually consider as spiritual. The Holy Spirit should be the Administrator of the Church. What would the natural man do with the Church? He would make a success of it. The natural man worships nothing as he worships success and his idea of success. The natural man would put into the pulpit anybody provided he entertained the people, no matter what he preached. The natural man would put ungodly people into the choir, provided they could sing to please the people. The natural man would raise money for the Church by any means, if only the bills were paid. Be afraid of this strange man of our text, whom Paul calls the "natural man"! He is a dangerous fellow! He is

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plausible, persistent, and always pushing. He always boasts of his common sense, and wishes to conduct the Church very much as Barnum conducted his circus. He is not wise. He will come to grief. He is like Samson: he has great appearance of strength, but in the end he will pull the temple down on himself and all who are with him! The spiritual man must rule in the Church; because he discerns the true end of the Church. He knows what preaching and singing are for. He is guided of God, and he always goes to God and lays the temporalities of the Church before his heavenly Father, and the Holy Spirit directs him. "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work," said the Holy Spirit, and He is continually speaking to the church which commits all its affairs into the hands of God. Therefore, refer everything to Him.

J. G. Whittier once said: "The longer I live, the more I think that it is not how much we know when we get to heaven. I do not think our knowledge will amount to much. It is the state of the heart before God."

"Spiritual things": there are not any other things in the world that are much worth mentioning. There are things that we see and touch and taste; but the real things are the things of the heart and of the spirit, the things we cannot handle. Home and friendship are spiritual things. Ideals and aspirations are spiritual things. Hopes and motives, grand and noble, are the things of the Spirit. The true, the beautiful and the good are spiritual things, and they make up life. The love of God, the grace of God in Jesus Christ, holiness, faith, patience, all the fruits of the Spirit—all are spiritual. When we

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have named them all, there is not much left in life that we care about.

Spiritual things and spiritual discernment. That is a beautiful verse, the best description of life that ever was made: "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." That is life at its best; life as it should be: "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." Life is all spiritual if we have the spiritual mind; there is nothing common, or unclean, or material about it. The spiritual man is the real man and knows the real life. If he walks not after the flesh but after the Spirit, he knows God. That is all there is to know, and that is life! Not in any limited sense he knows God, as religion simply set apart from other interests; but in the great, wide sense in which God is in all his life. He lives in God, and he knows God, and he walks with God. So, by the Spirit, he lives more and more in God, and God reveals to him "the things of the Spirit."

O Thou Who art a Spirit, speak unto us who are spirits, and teach us. Do Thou enable us, by Thy Spirit, to follow Thee. We thank Thee for life, that great, wide, eternal blessing. Not the threescore years and ten; but life—eternal life. We pray Thee that we may have it. "This is life eternal, that we might know Thee, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent"—whether here or whether there, that we may know Thee. Give us spiritual discernment; give us the Holy Spirit. Enable us as a Church to follow Thy leading, and enable us to commit our way to Thee. We ask it in the name of Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

VI.

The Life Triumphant.



The Life Triumphant.

Preached June 23rd, 1902.

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us."—ROMANS 8: 37.

WE have read from the grandest chapter in all the Bible, the Eighth of Romans. If all the rest of the Scriptures were blotted out, we should have in that one chapter the essentials of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But the truths in that Gospel are transfused through a human personality. The Apostle Paul is writing out of the very centre of his soul; he gives us here the very life of his life. The whole chapter is tense with religious faith and feeling and experience. When we read these words we say: "This man has mastered life." He is not shattered and cast down by the agonies of the battle. No man ever more driven by the storm of life; and yet—he rides the storm in triumph! We want to know the secret of it. Any man is worth listening to who can tell us how to conquer life. Not, who can give us a few rules for the conduct of life, which anybody can do; but the man who has penetrated to the very core of life, and can tell us how to live so that life shall not be a sad defeat, but a glorious victory!

1. The Life Triumphant begins in friendly relations with God.

There is no condemnation upon it. It is free from the law of sin and death. At its very centre, the life triumphant is right with God. It is "in Christ Jesus"; and so it is a redeemed life. The sense of triumph in life begins just there, when we are conscious that the guilt of sin is blotted out in the pardon of a reconciled God. Settle beyond recall, that the first step in the conquering life is to decide the great question of sin; and in order to attain triumph, make a clean breast of it. First of all, cast sin, and the sinner himself, upon the free and full grace of God in Christ Jesus, for salvation. Then determine to have done with sin for ever. Then, and supremely, rest not in any effort of self; rest in Jesus Christ to break the power of sin. All settled! It is not a question of a few details of conduct, a few faults corrected, a few virtues attained. It is a question of becoming right with God in the very centre of being, as to the love of sin and as to the practice of sin. Let a man say: "I am done with it for ever, so far as in me lies; I am done with it in God's way, by God's grace, and in Jesus Christ." Then the sense of victory! "In all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us."

The man may stumble and fall at times. He has the treasure in an earthen vessel. He is not already perfect; but his heart and conscience are at peace with respect to sin. Sin has no more dominion over him. Grief and distress at times, if he is not wholly true to his Lord; but where sin abounds grace does much more abound. Sin is a vanquished foe. It is



this continual pottering with our sins which gives us the sense of defeat and dissatisfaction. The conquering life deals with great life questions, and settles once for all before the cross of Jesus Christ this burning question of guilt and sin.

II. *The Life Triumphant is empowered by divine forces.*

It is not a human struggle, but a divine work in the soul. The conqueror becomes conscious more and more of compulsions, heavenly compulsions, within, and the sense of personal effort diminishes. The conqueror says: "Something is being done within me that I am not doing." The test of the triumphant life is this: whether one can say understandingly, "Christ liveth in me." Life is never free—triumphantly and gloriously free—until it loses the sense of struggle and vain endeavor in the sense of being taken up and carried on victoriously by a power that is higher than itself. It is the invalid who is conscious of struggling to live. In the robust and the strong, life lives itself. "More than conquerors"—who walk "not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." As if some tired traveller who had been walking all day after the flesh, exhausted and dusty at night, should suddenly feel poured into him the tingling life, the tireless vigor, the exhaustless strength of an archangel of God!

The triumphant life is a compelled life, yet free. It is a constrained life, feeling within it the impelling power of the love of God. Little logicians and petty philosophers, living on the level of human reason, may peck away at these grand words of Paul in our chapter, where he says: "Whom He did fore-

know, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son . . . Whom he did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified"; but the conquering life understands these words. Bring to me all the passages you can find in the Bible which tell me that my life is God's work — my spiritual life, I mean — that it is not my work, that I did not begin it, that I am not carrying it on; that God began it, that He chose me, He called me, He converted me, He justifies me, He will glorify me. I want them all. The more you bring, the more triumphant is my life; because I realise then that it is no feeble effort of mine, that it is indeed the work of my Saviour and the Spirit of my heavenly Father. Man is never a conqueror until he feels within his soul the mighty power of God.

III. *The Life Triumphant is marked by unquestioning obedience.*

True liberty is not freedom to do as we like, but freedom to do as we ought. When a man is free to choose and to do what his conscience and his God tell him he ought to do, then he is free indeed, and not before, though before that he may be free to do as he pleases. The conquering life is a life of obedience, and therefore a life of fruitfulness. The Bible speaks of the "crown of life." Life is to have its coronation, and the test of life is the crown which it wins. When we lay aside the load and say "Good bye" to earth, what have we to show for life? A million dollars? houses and lands? No more! Poor man! Poor Christian! A name for good fellowship, a few happy companionships, some amiabilities of

character, a few temptations overcome, considerable learning, success, titles, property? No more! No faith, no prayer, no fellowship with God, no sense of being led by the Spirit of God, none of the joys of Jesus Christ? Empty, poor, defeated life, with self on the throne! Is any life so hollow as to devote itself simply to dress, to gossip, to amusement, to social frivolity? Is it possible that any mortal being, destined in a few years to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, is spending these few years—the only years he has—in simply getting gold, or pampering the body, or making his hand skillful, or educating his intellect, or making a living? Poor—ininitely poor—with its tinsel crown, is the life of self-seeking, however respected, however honored it is; it is defeated, baffled, cast down at the end!

The life triumphant obeys and serves. Losing itself it is saved. Triumphant in seeking to do God's will. Triumphant in the consciousness of pleasing Him in all things. Triumphant in bringing forth some little fruit to His praise, and shining that men may glorify Him. An abundant life, a fruitful life. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Coronation of obedience, service, fidelity to God!

IV. *The Life Triumphant is life within a life.*

Circumstances are the shell. The outward life perishes; but the inward life is renewed day by day. The life without suffers; but the life within is calm and composed. The life temporal may have success, as men count success, or it may have failure; but the life eternal says to circumstances: "You are all working together for my good." Tears, agonies, griefs in the outer life; but deeper down the conquer-

ing life says: "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed." There are men and women who are cuffed and battered down by the ill fortunes of life until they give up, and life for them is simply disaster. There are men favored and high in the world's esteem in whose life there is no note of triumph—we never hear it. There are men and women who are crushed by trouble and pierced by a thousand thorns whose hearts are in perfect peace. There are men and women who are prospered who are not spoiled by their prosperity, but their hearts are kept in perfect peace, because their minds are stayed on God. Somehow they have triumphed.

I am not picturing any imaginary life this morning. It is indeed a life on a high level. It is, if you please, an ideal life; but it is the ideal life that God has given us in this Book, and it is the ideal life that has been realized and is being realized to-day on all sides. In every walk of life there are victors who say to circumstances: "You can give me pain, but you cannot break my hope. You can wring my heart, you can force my tears, you can kill me; but you cannot touch my other life. It is hid; it is beyond your reach. You may hurt me, in a sense; but you are all working together for my good. The life you touch may quiver and weep; but the life that you cannot touch is at peace. It is life within a life, and it sings and exults and triumphs."

V. *The Life Triumphant is enriched with sweet satisfactions.*

It has enough as it goes along—temporal and spiritual. It has contentment; which is consistent

with the highest aspirations and the noblest ambitions. Its longings are not the longings of dissatisfaction, but of incompleteness. A satisfied life! Not satisfied in the sense that it has to-day all that it will want to-morrow; but satisfied in the sense that its wants to-day are all supplied. It says: "I am satisfied"; and it says: "I shall be satisfied." A Christian has conquered life when he can say: "I have now, in Christ Jesus, all that I now want and need." Paul, in this chapter, enumerates some of these satisfactions.

The triumphant life is led of the Spirit: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." The triumphant life has mastered the sweet satisfaction of prayer: "We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit helpeth our infirmities." The triumphant life is fused and fired by the love of God: "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

It is not satisfied in the sense that it has attained. It may say: "I am less than the least of all saints"; but it is satisfied in Christ. Its peace is not disturbed by this meddlesome self which comes intruding into so many lives with its impertinent weaknesses and complaints. Forget self in Christ. What is self when Christ is there? In Christ it has satisfaction. No one can triumph in life, or have the sense of conquering, so long as he is perpetually haggling and quarrelling with this miserable thing we call "self." For in all these things we are to be "more than con-

querors." It is to be "through Him Who loved us." When His life — *His life*, not ours; His atoning, redeeming, sanctifying life — fills the heart and life, it satisfies.

"Satisfaction" is not a word that is to wait for us until we get to heaven. No Christian need to live in the aching, painful sense of lack, never attaining, never satisfied, living through this life as if he must always be the slave of sin and of sorrow. He is to be satisfied! Sweet satisfaction! There have been men who have asked God to cease giving, to desist from pouring into their souls His spiritual blessings, because they could hold no more! He had given so much that it was pain!

VI. *The Life Triumphant lays hold of eternal glory.*

"His glory you shall see, some time, some where." While it is satisfied now with what it has now, it is not satisfied to continue for ever in its present satisfaction. Everywhere in this chapter, and all through Paul's life, there is this grand outlook upon the great future; and all through this chapter, and all through Paul's religious experience, there is the consciousness of heirship — "joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." We are not to think that this life is simply a waiting for something which is to come. Not simply that. This life is the beginning; and the beginning partakes of the nature of the end. It is to be triumphant there; therefore it is triumphant here in its beginning. If the last step is to be victory, then the first step is to be victory also. Victory now, the commencement of the eternal victory. Our

citizenship is in heaven, and sometimes here in the flesh we could almost wish that the hour were come. Paul, in the midst of the fray, paused to think of the crown of righteousness that is laid up; of the house not made with hands. That wonderful Fifteenth of First Corinthians, in which Paul sets before us the glory of this corruptible putting on incorruption and this mortal putting on immortality, ends with the word "victory": "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is the life triumphant here, looking toward the life triumphant there. It is all victory. Every conquering life draws largely on the future, and triumphs in the coming glory.

"Far into distant worlds she pries,
And brings eternal glories near."

It is not simply looking forward and waiting, but living here and now on heavenly plains and with the heavenly spirit.

"The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets,
BEFORE —

yes, BEFORE —

we reach the heavenly fields,
Or walk the golden streets."

The triumphant life is ours to-day. "Whosoever will," let him take it freely.

In all these seven years I have tried to lead my people into the riches of our inheritance in Christ Jesus. It has been my heart's desire that we might fulfill that noble aspiration of the Scripture, where it says: "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection." What-

ever you think of me hereafter, I pray you, do not remember me as the man who preached a religion too good and too high for ordinary mortals. It is the only religion that is good enough for any of us. It is possible to every one of us, here and now. If religion gets a slight hold upon a man, religion is a questionable blessing. It does not relieve the ordinary discomforts of life, and it adds peculiar discomforts of its own, by chiding his conscience without satisfying it, and by moving desires which it does not fill. Only a rich, full, triumphant religion can bring peace and satisfaction; and every one may have it. It is not reserved for the few whom we call "spiritual" people.

And this is the pressing question for us all—whether to go through life as conquerors, masters of life by the grace of God; or whether to go on under the sense of pain and defeat and loss. Each one has a life, and that life is worth everything to him. It is his to do with as he will. Here he is, with his life. It is all his, and no one can decide for him. Every child has stood in the store, clinching the one penny in his little hand, hesitating, doubting which of all the beautiful array of objects he wants most. What shall we buy with our life? It is our one investment. We wish we could spend it and keep it too; but we cannot. It is all the life we have. We are reluctant to let it go. The nursery rhyme says:

"If at first you don't succeed,
Try, try, try again;"

but the peculiarity of life is that we cannot "try again." "The tender grace of a day that is dead, will never come back to me." One life for one person,

and no exception. Failure here, and it is failure for ever. It is Waterloo, to be lost or won, and there is no second chance. And it is slipping fast. Oh, be conquerors, through Him Who hath loved us! Get the note of triumph into life! Minor chords, if you please, here and there, and plaintive notes perhaps when sorrow and trouble come; but clear and full and strong above all, the song of the conqueror, the note of the victor, the Life Triumphant!

THANKS be unto Thee, O God, Who givest us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ! We would greatly exalt Thy grace. If we are to have triumph, it must be by the power of God. Forgive us, if we have doubted Thee. Forgive us, if we have said that the life Thou dost offer as a gift is too high for us. Indeed, Lord! it would be too high if it were our attainment; but as it is Thy bestowment Thou art the judge; and Thou hast offered it to every one, and hast said: "Whosoever will, let him take freely." O God! give us triumph! Lift us above defeat and disheartenment and loss, and may there be in our life another life, the life within a life, the life that is hid with Christ in God! *Amen.*

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